

The PROSPER Act would improve student access to and participation in industry-led earn-and-learn programs and apprenticeships to allow students to hone their skills in a hands-on environment.

This summer, we sent major, bipartisan CTE legislation to the President's desk. The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act was the first legislation in more than a decade to modernize our Nation's CTE programs. The law will create innovative community partnerships while connecting Americans with programs to grow their skills and land in-demand industry jobs.

We have also continued to see the ongoing implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, WIOA. WIOA gives employers a seat at the table and encourages collaboration between local leaders as they work to create on-the-job learning opportunities.

In September, the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development heard from witnesses about how the law supports the development of locally based apprenticeship programs.

The President has bolstered our efforts by listening to the needs of American workers. Since President Trump's first month in office, American employers have hired over 400,000 apprentices. In June of last year, the President issued an executive order creating a Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion, and, earlier this year, the White House developed the Pledge to America's Workers. This groundbreaking initiative has resulted in over 160 companies and associations pledging jobs, education, and workforce development opportunities for more than 6 million American workers.

We made monumental strides over the course of the last 2 years, and we are continuing to look for innovative ways to connect effective education with in-demand jobs. Each of us knows a person with considerable gifts and talents who may not be suited for long-term postsecondary education. A baccalaureate degree is not the only pathway to a good-paying job. Apprenticeships are life changing and can provide countless Americans with the knowledge and skills they need to achieve lifelong success.

Thanks to the leadership of this body and the administration, Americans have greater access than ever before to the opportunities they need to excel in the millions of good-paying, in-demand jobs available nationwide.

HONORING HANK SANDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the extraordinary life and amazing career of Alabama State Senator Hank Sanders, also known as The Rock.

For the past 35 years, State Senator Sanders has been a powerful voice in the Alabama Legislature, ably representing the 23rd District since 1983. He was the longest serving chair of the Senate Finance and Taxation Committee from 1996 and served for four consecutive terms until Republicans took over the statehouse in 2010.

Senator Sanders is a lawyer; a statesman; a native of my hometown of Selma, Alabama; and a true Renaissance man. Along with his numerous legislative accomplishments, Senator Sanders has also penned more than 1,600 newspaper articles and columns known as Senate Sketches as a way of communicating directly with his constituents.

Senator Sanders' years of service to the State of Alabama and to the Alabama Legislature will be missed. For you see, Mr. Speaker, after 35 years, this lion of the Alabama Senate is retiring. Choosing not to run in 2018, he will be ably replaced by his daughter, who recently won that election.

Unlike many who found themselves in positions of power, Senator Sanders did not come from a privileged background. Senator Sanders came from humble beginnings, 1 of 13 children born to Sam and Ola Mae Sanders in Baldwin County, Alabama.

Growing up, Senator Sanders said what his family lacked in money, they more than made up for in love and support. The Sanders family provided constant encouragement for their children, pushing each of them to further their dreams through education.

At the age of 12, Senator Sanders was inspired to become a lawyer after reading an article about Thurgood Marshall. Following his graduation from Douglasville High School, Senator Sanders began pursuing his legal career, graduating near the top of his class at Talladega College.

After earning his bachelor's degree, Senator Sanders went on to enroll and graduate from Harvard Law School. He attended Harvard Law School in the 1970s on a Felix Frankfurter Scholarship, an award for underprivileged students who showed exceptional promise. During his time at Harvard Law School, he was president of the Harvard Black Law Students Association.

It was during law school that he found his life mate, his beloved wife, Faya Ora Rose Toure, formerly known as Rose M. Sanders. After graduating, Senator Sanders and his wife moved back to Selma, Alabama, my hometown.

Their decision to go to Selma was one that was made because they knew how important it was to do things in the Black Belt, saying they grew up to love and cherish the city, which provided an opportunity to build both of their careers and raise their family.

They started a very productive law firm by the name of Chestnut, Sanders, and Sanders.

During their 41 years together, they produced six beautiful children and nine grandchildren.

In 1971, Senator Sanders founded the law firm of Chestnut, Sanders, Sanders, and Pettaway, which was one of the top African American-owned law firms in the State of Alabama, as well as one of the largest in the country.

Senator Sanders dedicated his life to making sure he pursued justice on behalf of the underserved. He gave a voice to the voiceless, and he still works tirelessly today.

In 1982, Senator Sanders decided to pursue his passion for helping others on a State-wide level, winning a seat in the Alabama State Senate for the 23rd District. During his 35 years representing the largest political region in Alabama, Senator Sanders won seven bids for reelection.

Senator Sanders has proudly championed issues such as childhood education and nutrition, healthcare, women's issues, and removing the sales tax for food. He served as chair of the Finance and Taxation Education Committee, and he was voted Outstanding Legislator by the Alabama Legislative Black Caucus.

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Senator Sanders was voted a finalist for the Legislator of the Year Award by his fellow Senators. He has numerous awards to his credit.

On a personal note, Senator Sanders was my State senator for those 35 years representing my hometown of Selma. He is a legal and political giant in our community, and I join with our community this weekend in acknowledging his 35 years of service to the State of Alabama and to this Nation.

He is truly a renaissance man. He has a brilliant legal mind, and not only is he politically astute, but he is also a family man who begins every day with prayer and meditation. I think it is so important for those young folks who come behind us that we know and respect and honor Senator Sanders.

It is with great honor, Mr. Speaker, that I ask my colleagues to join me in acknowledging the lion of the Alabama State Senate, a man who has left an indelible imprint on the lives of so many in the Black Belt of Alabama, a community that he has represented for more than 35 years.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in acknowledging the accomplishments of State Senator Hank Sanders. He has served his constituents well, and his contributions to the State of Alabama and to this Nation will shape the political and social landscape of this great Nation for years to come.

TECHNICAL SERGEANT VIRGIL POE, ONE OF THE GREATEST GENERATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, born in the 1920s, he grew up in the Depression of the 1930s poor, just like many American children in the rural areas.